# This is what a banned Pride parade looks like!



This is what happens when a homophobic government passes a law to ban a Pride parade... up to 200,000 turn up to give the ban the finger.

In the shadow of escalating political tensions and a stringent crackdown on LGBTQ+ rights, Budapest Pride marked its 30th anniversary by becoming an extraordinary act of defiance against Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s government this weekend. Drawing an unprecedented crowd estimated between 180,000 and 200,000 participants, the event stood as Hungary’s largest LGBTQ+ gathering, swelling far beyond previous records with marchers coming from over 30 countries. What might have been a mere celebration instead transformed into a profound statement of resistance—underscoring not only the fight for LGBTQ+ rights but also for democratic freedoms amid growing authoritarianism.

Budapest, a pioneer among Central and Eastern European capitals, first held a Pride parade in 1997, symbolising early progressive strides in the region. However, the political tide has dramatically shifted since Orbán’s Fidesz party ascended to power 15 years ago. Under his administration, Hungary has systematically rolled back LGBTQ+ legal protections, embedding conservative Christian family values into the constitution. This legal framework bans same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, and prohibits the depiction or promotion of homosexuality or gender transition to minors in educational materials and media. The government’s "child protection" laws have intensified to outlaw events promoting LGBTQ+ themes, with this year’s legislation even empowering facial recognition technology to identify and penalise attendees of banned assemblies like Pride.

Faced with a formal ban on the 2025 parade and threats of fines up to €500 or imprisonment for organisers, opposition forces, activists, and international politicians rallied in solidarity. Budapest’s liberal Mayor, Gergely Karácsony, ingeniously sidestepped the prohibition by declaring the Pride a municipal event under city hall’s aegis—a status exempt from state bans requiring police approval. The city also deployed its own security, supplemented by private guards, to ensure participant safety against far-right counter-protests sanctioned by police permits. The march proceeded peacefully beneath a clear sky, vibrant with rainbow flags, bearing the slogan "We are at home," a firm assertion of the LGBTQ+ community's indigenous place in Hungary rather than an imported ideology.

The government’s reaction was sharp and politically charged. Orbán castigated the parade as 'repulsive and shameful,' accusing the European Union and opposition politicians of orchestrating the event to undermine Hungary’s sovereignty and traditional values—a claim lacking public evidence but underscoring his framing of the LGBTQ+ community as a scapegoat akin to migrants. This dispute plays into the larger political landscape, as Orbán faces waning support before the upcoming national elections. His strategy appears aimed at forcing opposition leaders to stake positions on contentious cultural issues, potentially fracturing opposition unity and galvanising conservative rural voters.

European institutions, long hesitant to confront Orbán, have stepped up their rhetoric following the Pride events. The European Commission president called for the parade's allowance, while more than 70 members of the European Parliament marched in support. EU officials stressed that the denial of assembly rights and the use of facial recognition surveillance breach fundamental EU values centred on human dignity, pluralism, and non-discrimination. The parade's scale and solidarity signal an intensification of the clash between Budapest’s illiberal governance and the bloc’s democratic norms.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/30/monday-briefing-how-budapest-pride-became-a-huge-show-of-anti-orban-defiance> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/hungarys-orban-accuses-eu-orchestrating-repulsive-pride-march-2025-06-29/> - Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán condemned the recent Budapest Pride march as 'repulsive and shameful,' accusing the European Union of orchestrating the event through opposition politicians. The Pride parade, which reportedly drew around 100,000 participants, defied a police ban and became one of the largest anti-government protests in recent years. Orbán made his accusations in a closed online group, claiming the opposition was acting under Brussels’ directive, although he provided no evidence. The Budapest municipality, led by opposition Mayor Gergely Karácsony, organized the event and has long been criticized by Orbán’s government as being aligned with EU interests. The Hungarian government had banned the march under a law passed in March to 'protect children,' part of a decade-long policy tightening restrictions on LGBTQ+ rights. Orbán's comments specifically criticized elements of the march, such as drag performances and information on hormonal therapy. As Hungary approaches national elections, the event is seen by critics as symbolic of broader suppression of democratic freedoms under Orbán’s Christian-conservative administration. The European Commission declined to comment on the matter, and Reuters was unable to independently verify all aspects of Orbán's statements.
3. <https://www.apnews.com/article/6919758b70c812bfe95dddb589e44132> - On June 28, 2025, approximately 100,000 people participated in Budapest Pride, the largest LGBTQ+ Pride event in Hungary's history, defying a government ban and police restrictions. The event marked the 30th annual Pride march and served as a powerful protest against Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's right-wing government, which has increasingly curtailed LGBTQ+ rights. In March, the government passed a law outlawing events that 'promote' homosexuality to minors, explicitly targeting Pride celebrations. Despite threats of heavy fines and surveillance, including facial recognition, marchers gathered to advocate not only for LGBTQ+ rights but also for the right to public assembly and democratic freedoms. Mayor Gergely Karácsony supported the event by classifying it as a municipal gathering, circumventing police approval. Authorities attempted to block the march and threatened organizers and participants with legal consequences, including imprisonment. The scale and defiance of the march were viewed as a significant political statement, challenging Orbán's authority as his popularity wanes in the polls. Participants expressed hope for societal change and greater democratic protections in Hungary.
4. <https://www.euronews.com/2025/06/28/budapest-pride-march-to-go-ahead-in-defiance-of-orbans-ban> - Senior European Union officials joined Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony at an international press conference on Friday at City Hall to mark the event. Mayor Karácsony opened the event by highlighting the significance of the large media turnout, saying it reflects deep concerns about the state of democracy in Hungary. 'Hungary has become a laboratory for dismantling democracy over the past 15 years,' the mayor said, calling the attempted ban on Pride the culmination of that process. He emphasized that Saturday’s Pride parade is a municipal event and is not subject to the recent legal bans introduced in the spring. 'Love cannot be banned, no one can be a second-class citizen in Hungary,' Karácsony declared. 'That’s why the capital’s municipality has taken the lead in organising Budapest Pride.' Karácsony welcomed the strong show of international support, noting the presence of representatives and mayors from nearly 30 countries. When asked about reported far-right counter-demonstrations organised by the Our Homeland Movement and the 64 Counties Youth Movement—both of which have reportedly received police permits— Mayor Karácsony responded that he would personally vouch that no reprisals would be taken against those participating in Budapest Pride. He stressed that it would reflect poorly on Hungary if freedom of assembly could not be protected at a municipal event, while far-right groups were allowed to protest against others' rights. He expressed confidence that such counter-demonstrations would not be permitted, adding that in recent years, police had handled similar situations responsibly. 'I am sure that unless there is an explicit political order for the police not to fulfil their constitutional duty, they will carry it out professionally—as they have done in previous years,' he added. In response to further questions, the mayor added that the city would deploy hundreds of its own security officers and, for the first time, hire private security guards to help ensure the safety of the event. Meanwhile, the national civil law enforcement agency of Hungary (ORFK) said on Friday evening that, because the city had not appealed the ban, it had become final. However, the city disputes the legality of the ban, arguing that municipal events do not require a permit and therefore cannot be lawfully prohibited on that basis. EU Commissioner for Equality Hadja Lahbib also spoke at the press conference, condemning discriminatory treatment of LGBTQ+ people under Hungarian law. 'It is not acceptable to think that members of the LGBT community are subject to different rules than other people,' she said. 'Budapest is famous for its acceptance, and diversity is one of the foundations of the European Union. This diversity must be protected.' Lahbib added. 'Saturday’s event is not just a parade—it is a demonstration and a celebration of the fact that we are diverse, and the fact that we can show it, we can live it also.' Nicolae Ștefănuță (Renew Europe), Vice-President of the European Parliament, came on behalf of European Parliament President Roberta Metsola to deliver a unanimous message: human rights must be respected. Metsola said that the EP delegation of around 200 people to the march would be the largest group of human rights defenders. Ștefănuță pointed out that by joining the EU, member states are also accepting common European values. 'If 50,000 people want to take part in a peaceful event, they have the right to do so, and this must be guaranteed in Hungary in accordance with European law and the Hungarian authorities have a duty to protect the participants,' he explained, adding that Pride is a celebration of love and pride. Budapest Pride Spokesman Máté Hegedűs recalled that the parade has been held peacefully for decades and that they have been preparing for the 30th anniversary for two years. This year's slogan is 'We are at home' - a message that the LGBTQ+ community is not an ideological product imported from the West. Hegedűs said they expect the police to protect the participants of the event from any potential far-right threats.
5. <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/23/europe/hungary-pride-ban-lgbtq-crackdown-intl/index.html> - The move sparked lively protests in Budapest earlier this week, with organizers of the city’s Pride vowing to continue with the annual festival despite the new law and declaring: 'We will fight this new fascist ban.' A spokesperson for Budapest’s mayor, Gergely Karácsony, told CNN that he would work with organizers to find 'a solution to hold the event again this year,' branding the new law 'an attack on the right to assembly.' For Antic, who describes himself as a 'proud gay man,' the ban is a violation of his right to express himself. 'The new laws make it difficult to imagine a positive future for LGBTQ+ people in Hungary,' he told CNN. 'The legal environment feels more restrictive, and it’s worrying to think about what lies ahead.' Robert Antic, who is representing Hungary at this year's 'Mr Gay Europe' competition.